

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 05001 141344Z

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: USEGJC, PINT, ECON

SUBJECT: STUDENTS: VISITS TO US

SUMMARY: GOE HAS ASKED THAT WE ASSIST IN ARRANGING FOR BRIEF VISITS TO US BY EGYPTIAN STUDENTS AS MEANS OF ALLAYING CONCERNS OVER ECONOMIC POLICIES EGYPT IS FOLLOWING AND OBJECTIVES THEY WILL ATTAIN. EMBASSY REQUESTS PROMPT ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBILITIES. END SUMMARY.

1. ABDEL RAHMAN SADEK, A CAREER CIVIL SERVANT WHO IS IN CHARGE OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS SECRETARIAT AT PEOPLES ASSEMBLY, CALLED ON A/DCM APRIL 12 TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF ARRANGING VISITS TO US BY STUDENT GROUPS FROM EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES. SADEK EXPLAINED HE WAS ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM SPEAKER MAREI, WHO INTENDS TO MAKE FORMAL REQUEST TO AMBASSADOR IF PRELIMINARY PROSPECTS ARE GOOD.

2. SADEK EXPLAINED THAT MAREI HAS BEEN MEETING REGULARLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY WITH STUDENT LEADERS IN ORDER TO INSURE THAT GOE IS AWARE OF THEIR PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS, AND TO EXPLAIN WHAT SADAT GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO DO. WHILE THERE ARE NO SERIOUS PROBLEMS, MAREI HAS EVIDENTLY BECOME CONVINCED THAT ONE OF MAJOR CAUSES OF STUDENT UNREST IS LACK OF FAMILIARITY WITH WESTERN SYSTEMS THAT EGYPT WISHES TO EMULATE IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FIELDS AND, PARTICULARLY, HOW STUDENTS WILL FIT INTO SYSTEM AFTER GRADUATION. ENGINEERING STUDENTS (SEE BELOW) WERE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY IN THIS CATEGORY.

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PAGE 02 CAIRO 05001 141344Z

3. TO CORRECT PROBLEM, MAREI HAS DECIDED TO LAUNCH EFFORT TO

ARRANGE SUMMER VISITS OF ABOUT THREE WEEK DURATION TO WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND US. SADEK HAS BEEN SET TASK OF POSING INITIAL REQUESTS, AND HAS REPORTEDLY VISITED SEVERAL (UNSPECIFIED) WESTERN EMBASSIES TO EXPLORE MODALITIES. HE DID NOT COMMENT ON RESULTS, BUT INDICATED HE WAS AWARE US VISIT POSED SPECIAL PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF DISTANCE AND RESULTANT COSTS.

4. WHAT EGYPTIANS HAVE IN MIND IS A TWO-PRONGER PROGRAM IN AMERICA. BASIC GOAL IS A THREE WEEK VISIT BY A GROUP OF ABOUT 40 STUDENTS FROM DIVERSE FACULTIES AND CAMPUSES. GROUP WOULD VISIT FOUR OR FIVE CITIES/UNIVERSITIES ON A FAMILIARIZATION AND TOURIST BASIS, WITH OBJECTIVE OF SEEING FOR THEMSELVES WHAT US IS ABOUT, ITS PROBLEMS AS WELL AS ITS SUCCESSES. IF POSSIBLE, GOE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO ARRANGE A LONGER STAY (THREE MONTHS) FOR ABOUT 20 ENGINEERING STUDENTS, WHO WOULD UNDERGO A WORK/STUDY EXPERIENCE WITH AMERICAN COMPANIES. (SADEK, WHO HAS SOME KNOWLEDGE OF US VISA MATTERS, RECOGNIZED THAT THIS WAS MORE COMPLICATED MATTER.)

5. SADEK ACKNOWLEDGED THAT FINANCES ARE A PROBLEM, SINCE TRAVEL AND LIVING COSTS WOULD BE FAIRLY HIGH FOR BOTH GROUPS, AND QUESTION OF "PAY" FOR ENGINEERS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY COMPLICATED. NONETHELESS, HE REQUESTED THAT A REPLY BE PASSED TO HIM SOON, SO THAT MAREI CAN FOLLOW UP.

6. COMMENT: AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE FROM OUR REPORTING, STUDENTS CONTINUE TO BE A SOURCE OF CONCERN FOR GOE. SITUATION AT PRESENT APPEARS TO BE AT A CYCLICAL LOW-POINT IN TERMS OF ACTIVE OPPOSITION, BUT IT IS CLEAR UNIVERSITIES CONTINUE TO BE A POTENTIAL TROUBLE SPOT, AND THAT SADAT REGIME IS PAYING CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO STUDENT PROBLEMS.

7. ANYTHING THAT USG CAN DO IN THIS REGARD WILL CLEARLY HAVE CONSIDERABLE EFFECT IN TERMS OF OWN RELATIONS AND BE GREATLY APPRECIATED. THE EFFECT OF SUCH A VISIT ON INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS AND STUDENTS IN GENERAL IS PROBLEMATIC, BUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GESTURE IS NOT: SADAT WOULD REGARD IT AS A SIGNIFICANT DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT. WHILE RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED, EMBASSY NEVERTHELESS RECOMMENDS ACTIVE CONSIDERATION OF THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 CAIRO 05001 141344Z

A PROMPT REPLY.

8. AID FUNDING UNDER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IS PERHAPS ONE MEANS FOR COVERING THE ENGINEERS--WHICH MAREI PLACES ON THE "MOST IMPORTANT" END OF THE LIST--AND IT OCCURS TO US THAT THE JOINT BUSINESS COUNCIL MIGHT BE ASKED TO TAKE A PART IN THE EFFORT SINCE MANY OF THE MEMBERS ARE INVOLVED IN RELATED FIELDS. ALSO, THE UNITED STATES YOUTH COUNCIL

HAS ALREADY DEVELOPED AN EXCHANGE RELATIONSHIP WITH EGYPT AND MIGHT BE ABLE TO PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN THIS UNDERTAKING. THERE MAY BE OTHER WAYS FOR PROVIDING THE NECESSARY RESOURCES, FOR BOTH ENGINEERS AND TOURISTS, AND WE REQUEST THAT ALL OF THEM BE EXAMINED.

9. LOCAL PRESS APRIL 14 REPORTS MAREI TOLD STUDENT GROUPS PRECEEDING DAY THAT VISITS AND SUMMER EMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE WERE BEING WORKED ON. US WAS NOT MENTIONED. EILTS

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